

Message Text

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ORIGIN ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 OES-09 H-01 CG-00 DOTE-00 EB-08
COME-00 SSO-00 DLOS-09 L-03 SCS-06 CA-01 NSCE-00
SS-15 PA-01 ICAE-00 /068 R

DRAFTED BY ARA/CAR:RJSURBER:NHM
APPROVED BY ARA:SASHELTON
-----049305 190024Z /64
O 190006Z AUG 78
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY NASSAU IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 211373

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: BF, EFIS

SUBJECT: FISHING BOAT INCIDENT

REF: NASSAU 1732

1. DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY SHELTON AND ACTING
BAHAMIAN DESK OFFICER SURBER BRIEFED CONGRESSMEN PEPPER
AND LEHMAN AS WELL AS SENIOR STAFFERS FOR SENATOR STONE
AND CONGRESSMAN FASCELL AUGUST 17 ON DEPARTMENT AND
EMBASSY CONCERN THAT SHOULD LOBSTER FISHERMEN ATTEMPT TO
TEST GCOB RESOLVE BY RETURNING TO BAHAMIAN-CLAIMED FISHING
GROUNDS, A VIOLENT CONFRONTATION CAN OCCUR. MR. SURBER
ALSO BRIEFED CONGRESSMAN MOORE (R - LOUISIANA) ON THE
SITUATION BY TELEPHONE.

2. MS. SHELTON OUTLINED THE HISTORY OF THE DISPUTE AND
OUR VIEW THAT GCOB IS NOT PREPARED TO REOPEN FISHERIES
NEGOTIATION IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. SHE POINTED OUT
THAT THE VESSELS SEIZED AUGUST 11 WERE ILLEGALLY FISHING
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IN BAHAMIAN WATERS AND THAT GCOB ENFORCEMENT EFFORT IS NO
MORE RIGOROUS THAN OUR OWN. TO AVOID FUTURE INCIDENTS,
FLORIDA-BASED FISHERMEN MUST RESPECT BAHAMIAN FISHERIES
CLAIMS. USCG IS PREPARED TO ISSUE A NOTICE TO MARINERS,
SIMILAR TO THAT ISSUED AT THE TIME OF THE ORIGINAL BAHAMIAN

SPINY LOBSTER LEGISLATION, CAUTIONING FISHERMEN THAT THE

BAHAMAS HAS ESTABLISHED A FISHERIES ZONE AND THAT VESSELS OPERATING IN BAHAMIAN-CLAIMED WATERS WITHOUT GCOB PERMISSION ARE SUBJECT TO SEIZURE AND FINE. BRIEFING CONCLUDED BY SOLICITING VIEWS OF CONGRESSMEN AND STAFFERS AS TO WHAT MIGHT BE DONE TO AVOID FUTURE CONFRONTATIONS.

3. CONGRESSMAN PEPPER AGREED THERE WAS GREAT POTENTIAL FOR LAST WEEK'S INCIDENT TO ERUPT INTO AN ABRUPT "LOBSTER WAR." HE SAID HE HAD UNSUCCESSFULLY ATTEMPTED TO CONTACT MINISTER ADDERLEY OVER THE WEEKEND AND WOULD DO SO AGAIN LATER ON THE AFTERNOON OF THE 17. MS. SHELTON SUGGESTED THAT THE MOST USEFUL INFORMATION THE CONGRESSMAN COULD ELICIT WOULD BE WHAT ADDERLEY MIGHT PROPOSE TO RESOLVE THE PROBLEM, ESPECIALLY IF HE BELIEVED REOPENING FISHERIES NEGOTIATIONS WOULD BE USEFUL.

4. CONGRESSMAN PEPPER SAID THAT CUBAN-AMERICAN FISHERMEN IN FLORIDA WERE PARTICULARLY BITTER OVER THE ABRUPTNESS WITH WHICH THE BAHAMIAN GOVERNMENT HAD WITHDRAWN THEIR ACCESS TO THE LOBSTER FISHERY. WHILE CUBAN-AMERICAN FISHERMEN WERE AWARE OF BAHAMIAN CLAIMS AND LAWS, A COAST GUARD NOTICE COULD SERVE TO DISCOURAGE SOME FISHERMEN FROM RETURNING TO BAHAMIAN WATERS. WHEN WE LEARN THE NATURE OF PEPPER'S CONVERSATION WITH ADDERLEY, WE WILL INFORM THE EMBASSY.

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5. CONGRESSMAN LEHMAN EXPRESSED THE OPINION THAT A COAST GUARD NOTICE WOULD BE A USEFUL STEP AND THAT IF FISHERMEN PERSISTED IN VIOLATING BAHAMIAN LAWS THEY WOULD HAVE TO FACE THE CONSEQUENCES.

6. CONGRESSMAN FASCELL HAS ISSUED A PRESS STATEMENT IN WHICH HE QUOTES FROM A LETTER HE HAS DELIVERED TO THE PRESIDENT AND SECRETARY VANCE (TEXT TO FOLLOW SEPTTEL) CALLING ON THE PRESIDENT TO RECEIVE PRIME MINISTER PINDLING IN WASHINGTON AS A FIRST STEP TOWARDS RESOLVING THE OUTSTANDING ISSUES BETWEEN THE TWO GOVERNMENTS.

7. THE DEPARTMENT IS WORKING WITH THE COAST GUARD TO DRAFT A NOTICE TO MARINERS THAT CAN BE ISSUED IN FLORIDA ALONG THE LINES DISCUSSED ABOVE.

8. DEPARTMENT WISHES TO COMMEND EMBASSY FOR ITS HANDLING OF THIS INCIDENT AND FOR THE POST REPORTING. VANCE

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